

The Majnūn of Laylā: A Visual Analysis of the Illustrations in the Manuscripts on Laylā Majnūn By Hatifi

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The current research is inspired by the Laylā Majnūn, manuscripts in the permanent collection of the Lahore Museum and the Punjab library respectively. By researching these manuscripts, the researchers aim to find out visual disparities as well as connections between these two manuscripts. The aim of this study is to explore the visual narrative within the manuscripts.

Methodology: The research is a visual analysis of the illustration in the manuscript Layla and Majnun by the poet Hatifi. Both manuscripts are the *nuskha* by the poet Hatifi in Persian. The illustrations in both manuscript are different from each other in a number of ways. For both the manuscripts the illustrator/ miniaturist is unknown, the date of the written text is present. The artist of both the manuscripts are unknown, therefore, historical evidence of visuals, artisan record, and books; continuity in the visuals of these illustrations and how they translate and evolve the narrative within the manuscript has been discussed. The methodology included analyzing the 07 illustrations from both manuscripts, which contain similar themes. The analysis also investigates how the visual representation of the lead characters change or evolve within each manuscript as the story progresses as well as how certain elements change or remain similar from one manuscript to the other.

Findings: As visual storytellers, these manuscripts not only reflect the timeless nature of the Majnūn-Laylā tale but also offer glimpses into the diverse artistic traditions that have shaped this narrative over the centuries.

Conclusion: Ultimately, this research serves as a steppingstone for further explorations of the visual and the type of illustrations in manuscript paintings. unraveling its complexities and enhancing our understanding of its enduring cultural resonance.

Keywords: Laila, Majnun, Storytelling, Visual Narrative, Hatifi, Poetry, Visual Data, Narrative Analysis.

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Introduction

The *Qissa* or tale of Layla Majnun has remained one of the most famous tales, not only in south Asia and the Arab world but also in the west. It is one of the most famous and tragic love stories in the world. It has been written down in the form of poetry as well as a story or tale throughout history. The first narrative that built its way has been from the Arabic narratives as a true tale around the 7TH Century. Later on, it became more famous in the Persian world by the famous poet *Nizami Ganjavi* (1192-1200), after Nizami in the 12th century there have been several poets who have attempted and verbalized the narrative in poetic form taking inspiration from him and adding their own touch to it. Among them Amir Khosrow completed his version in 1299. The most famous ones have been the *Laila Majnun* by *Hatifi* and *Fazuli*. From Persia the narrative has travelled to south Asia and been again the inspiration for decades and decades for writers, poets, painters and artists alike. The version of the poetry which was written by the poet Hatifi has been very famous and popular in the south Asian region.

The main interest in this study derives its roots from the miniatures present in the manuscripts from the Lahore Museum and in the Punjab University Library. The research also aims to link the current research to its historical context making connections to the miniature painting styles prevalent in the subcontinent as both the manuscripts under study are from the 17th and the 18th century respectively. and in general, to other manuscripts on the subject. The intent of the research is to locate the visual link between both the manuscripts, the style of painting and possible narrative connections. the MS 1561 is more Indian when compared to MS 54 which is more a mixture of Gujrati /Rajasthani /and Persian. The intent of this research increases the potential in trying to understand the origins of the visuals in these manuscripts as mentioned by Nadeem Omar Tarar (2011), specifically unique in this art form, their development and influences.

The Story of Laila O Majnun

Layla and Majnun is a story of love and loss, between two young lovers set in the Arab lands between two prominent tribes during the 7th century or so. The story became very famous and popular when the poet Nizami Ganjavi wrote it in his expressive quality in the form of a poetry known as *masnavi*, in Persian in 1188. After Nizami several poets followed suit to write their versions of the story. the version or *nuskha* written by Hatefi; became popular within the subcontinent and turkey predominantly from the 16th to 19th century. It has been presented in many Middle Eastern and sub-continental cultures, Muslim, Sufi, Hindu, and secular. Layla and Qays fall in love from childhood but are not allowed to continue their relationship pertaining to several reasons. Qays (called Majnūn, which means “possessed”) was perceived to be mad in his obsession with Layla. Layla was married off to another and Majnun became a hermit, devoting himself to writing verses about his profound love of Layla. Although they attempt to meet, they died however without realizing their love physically for each other.

Literature Review

The literature review falls into three categories, one is the history and origin of the tale found from various sources. Second is the study of visual imagery from other manuscripts and most important research on other articles, books and reading on manuscripts. The literature review focuses on the studies and reviews on the story of Laylā Majnūn taking into consideration the scholars who have studied the potential of the narrative and whether the narratives have been analyzed visually.

Before proceeding further into the research, it is important to understand the historical background of the narrative itself, how it came to be famous its origins, and how it evolved in under the Persian poet Nizami and became a legend, and how and why it influenced the other poets like Amir Khosrow, Fazuli, Hatifi and others to narrate and formulate their own versions of the poetry.in other terms create their own *nuskha* in the form of poetry.

The Historical Context of the Tale of Layla Majnūn

In order to fully understand and appreciate the tale of Laila and Majnūn, it is important to get familiarized with the historical context of the story itself, when and where it originated, why and how it got very famous around the Arabian world and reaching out into to the Persian literature which fully appreciated and flourished it throughout the world from the far east to Asia and the entire world. The earliest source on the story of Majnun Laila is Ibn Qutaybah's *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa alShu'arā* from the second half of the ninth century. This work dedicates a chapter to anecdotes of the lovers interspersed with poems attributed to them. Hossan (2018) in her dissertation describes the history of the tale of Laila and majnūn as; "The earliest accounts of the famous lover, Majnūn Layla, literally, "Laila's madman" in Arabic appear in anthologies from the ninth and tenth centuries. These anthologies contain dozens of anecdotes concerning the life of Qais ibn al-Mulawwah from the tribe of Banu 'Amir, called "Majnun" after he fell in love with Laila". The word majnūn in Arabic refers to a person possessed by a jinni and hence meaning "bereft of reason or mad, insane, unsound in mind or intellect or wanting therein."

Laylā Majnūn By The Poet Nizami Ganjavi

The poet Nizami Ganjavi (1192) narrated the tale of Laylā and Majnūn in the form of a masnavi in his unique style. the poem on Laila-o-Majnūn, also called Layla and Majnun or Leili o Majnun. it is considered an epic love poem composed in 584 / 1188. The poem is based on a semi historical and mystical Arabian love story about 7th century Nejdi Bedouin poet Qays ibn Al-Mulawwah and the woman he loves Layla bint Mahdi (also known as Layla al-Aamariya.) It is sometimes referred to as the "Romeo and Juliet" of Iran, The Laila majnoon written by Nizami relives the Arabic tale. But added a lot of Persian flavors to it. Nezami composed his masnavi for the ruler Shirvan shah Akhsatan on his request, and Initially, he was worried about writing a story of lost love and a love lost hero. He thought, how the story of an Arab boy wandering in rough mountains and burning deserts would be a suitable subject for royal court poetry and his cultured audience. Nezami's son convinced him to undertake the project, saying: "wherever tales of love are read, this will add spice to them". Nezami's version was mixture of both Arabic and Persian style of narration.

Nizami's version of the epic tale of Laila o majnūn was edited and translated into English by the Swiss scholar of Islamic culture Rudolf Gelpke. This translation was published in 1966. One of the other most read analysis of Nezami's Laila o majnūn has been published by Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab. In his book 'Layli And Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizami's Epic Romance'. it is a very comprehensive analysis in English of Nezami's romance of Layla and Majnun it examines the poetry underlying message and subjects such as chastity, constancy and loyalty in love and suffering by thoroughly investigating the personality and archetype of majnūn in detail.

The Story Of Laila Majnūn By The Poet Hatifi

The poet Abd-Allah Hatefi (d. 1521), was born in 1454 at Khargerd, a district of the town Jam, near the Khorasanian city of Herat. He was related to the great poet Jami through his mother. Hatefi composed poetry in several styles, but the khamisa (pentologue) style of poetry became something he was popularly known for. "The plot in Hatifi's Laila-Majnun is somewhat different from the plot told by his predecessors" (Hossan2018,63) His Khamisa became one of the most famous, even outside of Iran. Several of his works were reproduced and translated in Turkish during the Ottoman reign and the several editions of his Khamisa have been widely read throughout history in the Ottoman Empire and in the subcontinent. Among His most popular works is the Laila o majnūn, Which is the focus of the current research. In her PhD thesis titled "Crazy in Love" (2018) Mishal Hossan summarizes the Masnavi of Laylā Majnūn by Hatefi: The tale unfolds with a childless king's fervent prayer for a son, leading to the birth of Qais. As Qais and Laila, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, fall deeply in love during their school days, rumors surface, prompting Laila's mother to forbid her from attending school. The ensuing separation plunges Qais into madness, earning him the label Majnun. His family attempts to cure him, resorting to unconventional remedies involving dust from Laila's lane and strands from her veil. Despite

temporary relief, Majnun's unusual behavior persists. Laila is subsequently forced into marriage with Ibn Salam, but the union quickly unravels as she returns to her parents' home, refusing to be touched by her new husband. Majnun learns of Laila's marriage, and in an emotional exchange of letters, they express their enduring love. Attempts at reunion are thwarted, leading to a tragic sequence of events involving Shah Naufal's intervention, a failed poisoning plot, and a decisive battle. Laila witnesses Majnun's death in a dream and succumbs to her own grief. As her mother relays the news to Majnun, he breathes his last in the wilderness, embraced by the wild beasts that had become his companions. The narrative concludes with a pilgrimage caravan burying Majnun, sealing the fate of two lovers whose story transcends earthly boundaries. One of the ideas presented in the masnavi of Hatefi which makes it unique and powerfully dramatic, is the spiritual intimacy between Laylā and Majnūn. In Hatefi's Laylā Majnūn, Qais repeatedly creates opportunities to see the face of his beloved by pretending to be somebody else, even a blind beggar at one time, who supposedly stumbles upon the tent of Layla folio no: 36

Hatefi's Laylā Majnūn As One of the Most Popular Masnavi in the Subcontinent

More than any other the version of the masnavi and poetries composed on the theme of Laylā and Majnūn, the masnavi by Hatefi became the most popular and renowned in the Indian subcontinent and a lot of later Indian poets composed their poetry on Laylā and Majnūn basing it on Hatefi's version. This is one of the main reasons we find quite a number of manuscripts of Hatefi's Laylā Majnūn, more than any other, in Lahore and Karachi, in private and public collections. The Punjab university library collection has several version of Laylā Majnūn by Hatefi (illustrated and non-illustrated). In most of Hatifi's version of the tale, the plot that was followed remains the same as structured by Nizami Ganjavi. It changes and expands in certain episodes. for example, after shah Naufal plans and fights Laylā's family on behalf of Majnūn and defeats her father in battle, he himself falls in love with Laylā and plans on poisoning Majnūn in order to make Laylā his. He dies when one of his servants, serves Shah the poisoned drink and shah Naufal accidentally who takes the poisoned cup himself and dies from the very poison he wanted to give to Majnūn. In another scene in the poem Hatifi dramatizes the act when Majnūn hugs a stray dog from the street where Laylā lives.

In Hatefi's version the addition of the dog elaborates how Hatefi gave certain personality trait to Majnūn making him more real as the dog becomes an important character to paint and illustrate, a constant companion to Majnūn in loneliness and becomes a visual representation of majnun's personality and sensitivity. The dog is shown with Majnūn in most of the manuscripts and specifically in MSS54 throughout the later part of the manuscript in illustrations. One of the most notable reasons for Hatifi's popularity is his style and the way he uses the Persian language in a very simple way, as his use of language is generally simpler and more straightforward than the one used by Nizami, therefore perhaps was more easily read and understood in the subcontinent. Hatifi used realistic descriptions throughout the poetry and incorporated dramatic turns of events at certain key points within the story line to create twists in the plot. This is most likely one of the main attraction which the early modern Indian poets adopted and employed to an even greater degree in later versions.

Methodology

This qualitative research employs a methodology centered on visual analysis to understand and create links in the selected two Laylā Majnūn manuscripts. The approach involves a comprehensive study of both historical manuscripts and illustrations of Laylā Majnūn. Once the foundational exploration is complete, the researcher selectively chooses seven images from each of the chosen manuscripts, namely Hatifi's Manuscript (MS No:1561) from Punjab University Library and the Lahore Museum Manuscript (MSS No:54). The visual analysis seeks to explore the artistic intricacies, thematic elements, and stylistic choices embedded within these illustrations. This methodology allows for a meticulous examination of the visual storytelling present in the manuscripts, shedding light on the evolution and distinctive features of Laylā Majnūn depictions across different artistic contexts and historical periods. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the visual narrative and cultural significance encapsulated within

the chosen manuscripts. The analysis of the manuscript is based on formal visual analysis. The methodology for the formal analysis of artwork is based on Sylvan Barnet's 'A Short Guide to Writing about Art' 2003. Accordingly, each of the image is compared and contrasted with each other to get visual data, as a starting point the number of images in each manuscripts were compared, Similar themes within each miniature from MSS 54 and MS 1564 were analyzed. Comparative studies were reviewed, and links made on the basis of visual data and chronological assessment of the time period.

Descriptions of the Manuscripts

The manuscripts analyzed for this research are identified by their library/ museum manuscript number/ reference number. The description consists of the content of the manuscript, its date and provenance, and its principal features.

The manuscript MSS 54 begins with an unvan (fol.1 v) fig 1, in gold, green (repainted in places) orange, wine and black on an unusual white background. On a separate panel beneath the ornamental head piece is written bismillah in Arabic. The first illustration of the manuscript is that of the night of Miraj fig (1) (the ascension) where we see illustrated with extreme detailing, the Arch Angel Hazrat Jibra'il leading *Buraq* in the night. The illustration is in tones of warm colors from deep dark jewel toned oranges and reds and dark amber as the ground on which burak has landed.

In the upper background we see the walls of a house with an entrance door, lined with dense trees on the inside, majority of the surface of the miniature is covered with these characters. The treatment and style of the painting looks to be a mixture of Rajasthani and Persian style of miniature.

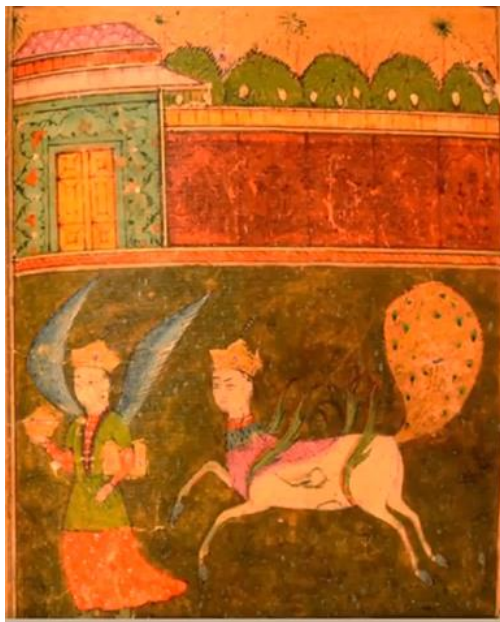


Fig:1 Burak and Angel Jibra'il, folio 01 MSS 54



Fig:2 A page from MS 1561 showing the size and configuration of the illustration on the manuscript.

The small miniatures cover half of the text box, over all manuscript size is 212mm x 122mm (8.35x4.8 inches). The approximate dimensions of the illustration box are 4.1x3.5 inches. The size of the MS 1561 is similar to MSS 54 with slight variations in paper, text and illustration size.

MS 1561

The first manuscript is from the Punjab university library collection. The title is Layla O Majnūn. The author of the poetry is Abdullah Hatefi. The script used is Nastaliq, it contains 31 folios or pages, and the size of the pages are roughly 8x5 inches. the illustration boxes are 3.75x3.2 inches (95x94mm). the written text is divided in two columns and each page has 13 lines. The calligrapher and the miniaturist are unknown, and the manuscript is unsigned. It is Dated on the last page in Persian and perhaps patronaged to shah Badshah dated 1091-1148 AH (1680-1735) First Half Of The 18th Century the Place: Alimanabad and dated as 29th Safar the illustrations are referred to as sindhi type illustrations (which may be incorrect). The illustration seems to be Mughal and Indian in their application of color, the choice of color is rather subtle when compared to MSS 54 composition and rendering style. In terms of composition the miniatures in MS1561 are more focused on the main subject of the theme i.e. Laylā Majnūn as the main characters. As they seem to stand out from the rest of the composition and the background. An ample amount of detail is given to the features and intricacies of the dresses and accessories. The faces and the figures occupy the main central position in almost all the paintings.

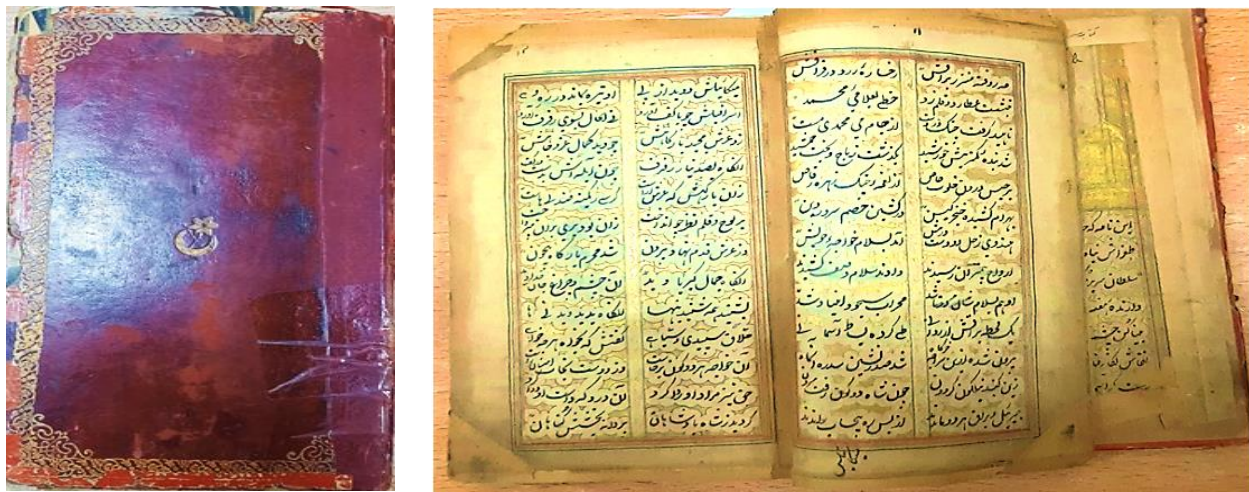


Fig: 03(a) Front outer cover of MS 1561(left), (b) a full open inner page MS 1561, *The Laila Majnun Manuscript*, Punjab University Library, 2023

MSS 54

The Author of the poem is Abdulla Hatefi it is written in Persian Script in Nastaliq. It has 85 Pages/Folios the Page Size: 212x124mm and the couplets are divided into 16 Lines. The calligrapher and the miniaturist are unknown, and the manuscript is unsigned. The Date mentioned on the manuscript is 18th Century (1751-1800). The Paper is mentioned as Normal paper. The Place of origin of the manuscript is Northern India.

MSS 54 has 38 Miniatures, the text is written two Columns. It was Copied During The 2nd Half Of The 18th Century, Probably In Northern India. The illustrations are notable for the use of flower covered textile in bright yellow and red with somber grey skies. Throughout the entire manuscript we see large weeping willows (baid-e- majnūn). Along with trees with pink blossoms in the background. The small figures use expressive gestures, and some of the figures seem to be copied from life study sketches for e.g. majnūn having his pulse taken (fol:30). In Terms Of Style, It Seems Like A Mixture Of Indian School, Persian, Pahari And Rajasthani School style seeing from the Architecture and the background details in the miniatures.



Fig 04: MSS54, Open inside page From Layla Majnūn Manuscript from Lahore Museum, Showcasing Folio no:14, Lahore museum,2023.

Time Span

Richly decorated and illustrated manuscripts of the Laila-Majnun narrative were commissioned by courts throughout these regions in the medieval and early modern period. Painters often depicted the same episodes, responding to their predecessors and adding their own interpretation of the story and its meanings.

There have been many other schools Miniature painting of the south Asian region which were working parallel to that of the Moghul which were derivatives from the Moghul school like the Pahari School (17th century), Rajasthani School (17th century), Kangra School (18th century) but also other older schools working independently with their own style and principles (Golconda/Decani/Hyderabad) (16th century). MS1561 is dated 1091-1148 AH (1680-1735) First Half Of The 18th century. Whereas MSS 54 is dated (1751-1800) Later half of 18th Century, both the manuscripts visually fall under a mixture of schools as one singular school cannot be identified as been used fully. The dominant school in miniature painting observed in mss54 is Rajasthani and ragamala, and some Persian elements, while the ms1561 seems to more influence of Mughal along with company painting influences.

Repetition as a Key Part of Visual Representation in Manuscript Illustration

The way in which a painting/miniature is rendered in the folios and manuscripts reveal certain distinct styles of painting. it remains the same in most cases if a certain style or school is followed this can be observed in several manuscripts studied. Repetition as a practice has been prevalent during the 16th and 17th century Persian and Mughal ateliers. A distinction in this is the fact that during the late 18th century to early 19th century the purpose of copying changes from repetition to making for British patronage. (Tarar 2011)

In the context of visual representation in miniature painting, imitation and response are essential components. Very similar story telling and literature, various forms of imitations are a very important part of Persian and pre-Moghul miniatures in the subcontinent. These practices were continued in Mughal painting, where painters often reused motifs, compositions, and themes from previous paintings to create

images that corresponded to the ones already created by established personages, the artists. These would be just as sophisticated as the ones from an acknowledged *Ustad*.

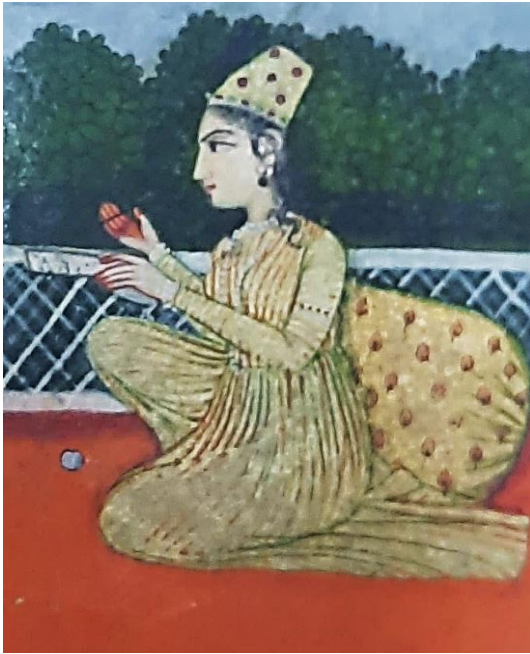


Fig:5 MS1561, (DETAIL) Laylā sends a message to Majnun.



Fig:6 MSS54, (Detail) Layla visit Majnūn in the wilderness

Dr Nadeem Omar Tarar (2011) talks about the tradition of miniature copying by suggesting that it was a cultural practice to copy miniatures from their predecessors.

...In most cases paintings were not signed, and copying was a cultural practice.

... Thus, the painter or poet consciously and intentionally borrowed familiar elements to create a new work that corresponded with its predecessors. (p.592) (Tarar,2011)

The Visual Representation of Laila and Majnun in Manuscripts

The way the miniature in the Laylā majnūn manuscripts from MSS 54 and MS 1651 have been rendered and executed in two very distinct styles the late Moghul style in MS 1651 and a typical Rajasthani and Indian style in the MSS 54, both these styles are different in reference to the rendering, the composition lay out and the color pallete of choice. In both the manuscripts, MSS 54 and MS 1651 generally the theme is the same but visually when we observe the painting, we can see that the architecture, the background the dressing and even the overall lay out in both manuscripts is very different from each other.

In MSS54 it is observed that the architecture shown in detail and with patterned walls and sconces, as well as well-structured domes and other specific structures which show the building belonging to a particular area or for a specific purpose where the texture and motif bare importance and meaning, from showing social status and time period. The MS1561 shows very minimal structural architecture as such instead we see glimpse of porches and fences, other than that it is observed to have detailed foliage and vast green patches of gardens, foliage and light muted skies.

The Rajput Influences on the Visual Language of Mss 54

Michelle Hossan 2011 in her thesis suggest that although there may be limited reference for textual evidence visual referencing and material culture implicates that the story of Laila and Majnun was well-known in Rajput courts and throughout the area of modern-day Rajasthan from the seventeenth century onward. The story of Laila and Majnun became a popular theme in Rajput painting (as well as in the Deccan, in Avadh, and in other regions), following extensive cultural interaction with the Mughal court. Miniature paintings of Laila and Majnun, independent of manuscripts, became particularly popular in Kota and Udaipur.

It is also observed that between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, these paintings became increasingly emblematic, following a limited set of conventional depictions of a limited number of scenes from the story. Hence the images of the two lovers were repeated in endlessly fixed, archetypal, pictorial compositions, without any narrative context. (Hossan pg. 122)

Visual Analysis of the Mss 54 And Ms 1561 for Comparative Study

A visual analysis was conducted on specific selected paintings from the Manuscript Illustrations in the manuscripts on Laila Majnun, (Hatifi) (MS No:1561) in the collection of Punjab university library; and the Laila Majnun manuscript (Hatifi) (MSS No:54) in the collection of Lahore Museum, these illustrations were then compared and contrasted with each other and other illustrations on the same themes made previously as well. The methodology for the formal analysis of artwork was based on Sylvan Barnet's 'A Short Guide to Writing about Art' 2003.

The following criteria were employed for the analysis.

- a) The overall selection of the theme within the story line
- b) Technique applied for the rendering of the painting.
- c) The general placement of the subject
- d) Background of the details within the image
- e) The relationship between the background and subject matter
- f) The facial expressions of the subject
- g) The clothing and attire (suggestion of a time period or a region)
- h) Flora and fauna within the image
- i) Architecture and space

The Paintings Under Discussion are as Follows

- 1, The front piece of *Unwān* (introductory page)
- 2, The birth of Qais folio 1
- 3, Layla and Qais in school
- 4, Majnūn at Laylā's door
- 5, Laylā hits her husband
- 6, Laylā goes to meet Majnūn in the forest
- 7, The death of Majnūn surrounded by his animals

1 The Title page (unvan)



Fig: 7 unvan (fol: 1v) the first page with head piece of the MS 1561 in the collection of The University of The Punjab, Lahore Library

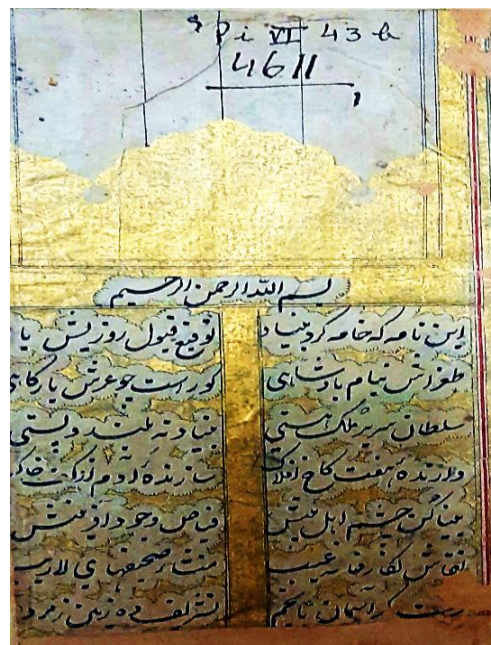


Fig:8 (right) unvan the first page with head piece of MS 54 in the collection of Lahore Museum, Lahore.

2 The Birth of Qais



Fig:9 Seated mother of Qais with a woman, the mother feeds the infant Qais, MS:1561 Punjab university library.

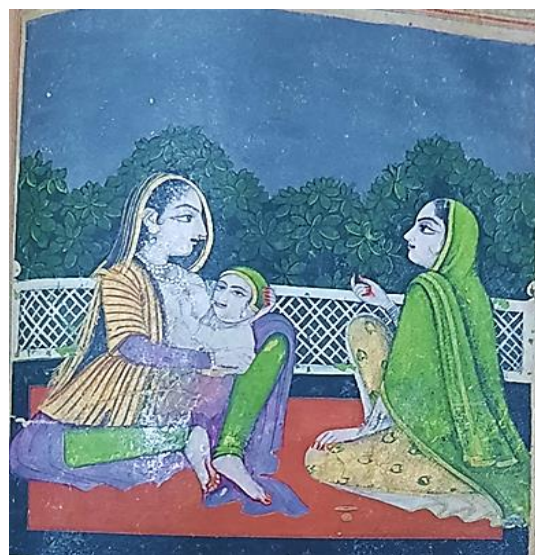


Fig:10 MSS 54, Birth of Qais (later called Majnūn) The reclining mother and nurse holding the newborn infant, a male guard with a staff standing outside the pavilion, source: facebook.com/lahoremuseumofficial/video, extracted on oct 2023.

3 Layla and Qais in school



Fig:11 MSS 54 Layla and Majnūn in school

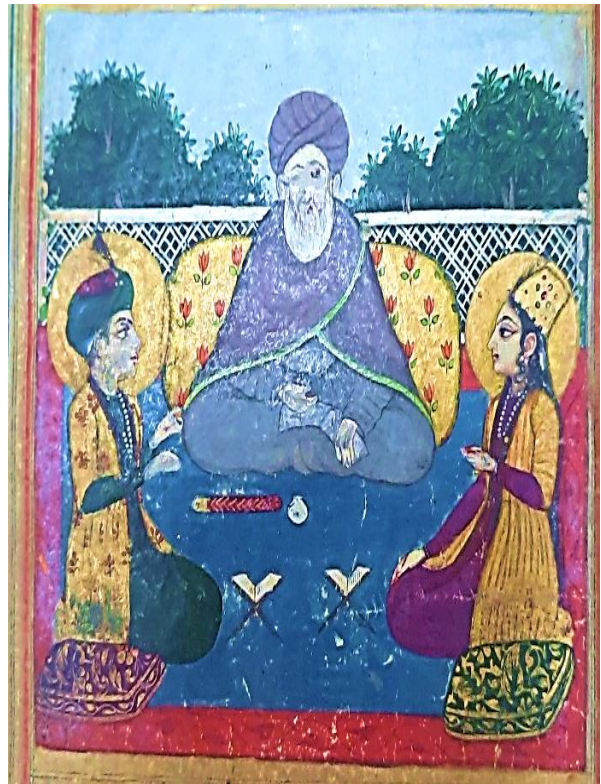


Fig:12 MS 1561 Layla Majnūn in school

4 Majnūn Sees Layla on the Balcony at Her House.



Fig:13 Majnūn looks up at Laylā MSS 54



Fig:14 MS156 Majnun at Laylā's door.

5 Laylā Hits Her Husband On Her Wedding Night, And He Falls Down.



Fig:15 MSS 54 Layla hits her husband.



Fig16 MS1561, Layla hits her husband, and he falls down.

6 Laylā Goes To Meet Majnūn On Her Camel

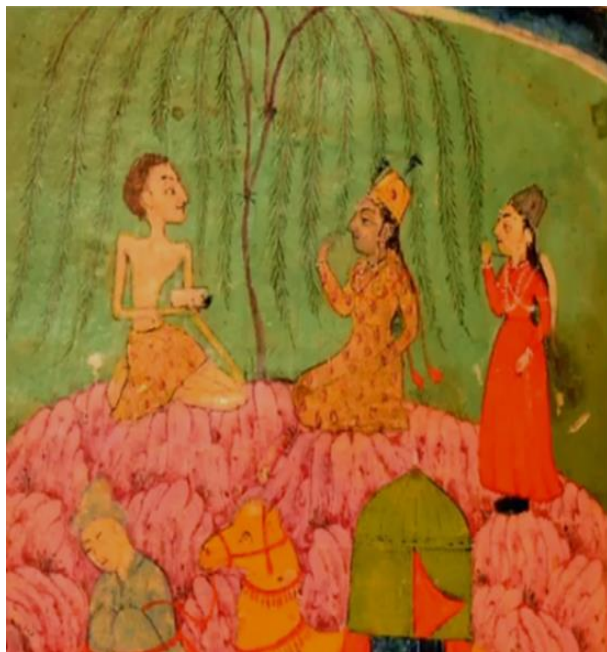


Fig:17 MSS54, Layla goes to meet Majnun in the wilderness, on her camel with her maid

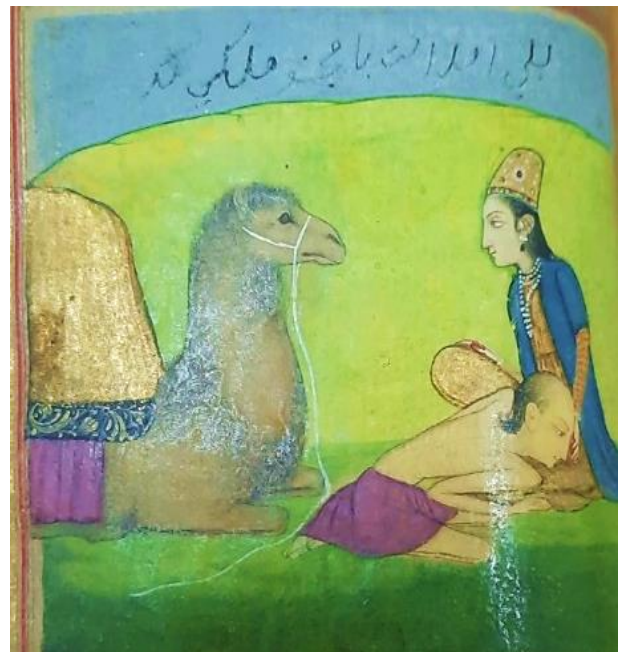


Fig:18 MS1561, Layla goes to meet Majnūn in the wilderness.

7 Majnūn on His Death Bed



Fig:19 MSS54 Majnun dying surrounded by wild animals.



Fig:20 MS1561 Majnun dying surrounded by wild animals.

The General Placement of the Subject

In the MSS54 the placement of the general subject is central. And the illustration is made keeping in mind the surroundings and the architectural sense of the space. The color palette, although vibrant when compared to MS 1561, is jewel toned and muted. The scale of the characters is also not bigger than the rest. In fact, it merges in with everything else. Key components of the composition which are present and consistent throughout the illustrations are the flora, the architecture and the division of these elements in the composition.

In MS1561 the general placement of the subject is also central, but the key distinguishing factor is that the main characters are the focus, they are larger than the other characters and the surrounding elements. The details are meticulously rendered to show each and every detail of the subject. More emphasis is laid on portraying the actual scene that is happening and to keep the viewer engaged on the main theme and the main character rather than on the background details.

Technique Applied for the Rendering of the Painting

Generally, in both the manuscripts MSS54 and MS1561, the technique of rendering is the traditional miniature rendering format, with exclusivity in both the manuscripts. In the MSS54 the rendering style which is observed is more of an amalgam of the Rajasthani school mixed with Ragamala Paintings with certain elements from the Persian miniature which can be particularly seen in the rendering of the mountains, which are typical to Persian miniature. According to the time period when this manuscript was made in the mid-17th century this was a time when majority of the northern subcontinent was under the control of the independent princely states, and a parallel school of miniature paintings was establishing and working alongside that of the Mughal school Style such as the Basohli Punjab plain, Ragamala and the Rajasthani school were flourishing and combining along with that of the Persian and the Moghul school. Stuart C Welch (1985) in his book INDIA: Art and Culture 1300-1900 mentions that as the Mughal took over, specifically during the time of Aurangzeb (1687-1724) a lot of the independent miniature schools incorporated within their styles, Persian and Turkic elements; Resulting in paintings which visually looked pre-Mughal but within the details one can see the emergence of a new hybrid style.

In MSS 54 this mixing and interplay of different styles can be seen in the technique and style of the rendering of the facial expressions, the color palette the architecture and in the use of the space. The treatment of the architectural details are rendered in typical Rajasthani style. In MS1561 the technique is a mostly inspired from Mughal miniature with specific attention to perspective study which link the British and company painting style of miniature as well, this can be observed by the rendering style of the painting and the typical softer and minimalistic muted color palette. Along with the flat application with meticulously rendered details.

Background of the Details Within the Image

In both the manuscripts the details of each object and the architecture play a very important role in determining the time period, the status, and the environment of the subject matter. In the case of the MSS54 the architecture depicts typical Rajasthani surroundings the walls are decorated motifs, and painted in a multifarious of hues, which make the background rather textured, the clothing worn by the women also depicts how people of that particular region would dress. colorful hues; typical of the women of Rajasthan (MSS54). In MS 1561 the background in almost all the folios is minimal with flat blue skies, a pavilion like a terrace can be observed in almost all the folios. With very minimum details. We can't really place the historical significance of the background detail. The only thing which gives the viewer some detail about the time period may relate to the use of foreground and the use of perspective to indicate the difference in the background suggest some colonial (company painting) influence.

The Overall Selection of the Theme for Painting

In the traditional sense the famous and popular manuscripts were always copied for several patrons within a region and sometimes the themes from original versions were carried on and copied by others. There were certain themes very popular which would be copied numerous times for different patrons. These themes would be followed for centuries. Therefore, we see similar attire and similar gestures being followed for nearly two centuries or more in quite a number of miniatures. Similarly in the manuscripts under study MSS54 and MS1561 it can be observed that similar themes have been painted. With the exception to some pages which are different. Overall, the selection of theme for painting in the manuscripts remains similar for the rest of the illustrations.

The Relation Ship between the Background and Subject Matter

In MSS 54 it is observed that the background merges together into a cohesive and almost monochromatic, highly patterned and textural detail. The subject in the foreground is also within the same tones and does not stand out in contrast.

In MS1561 it is the opposite, as the subject of the painting stands out in contrast when compared to the background we can see a visual difference in the size of the subject, we can judge the distance of the subject from the background, we can distinguish the prospective study as well. in MSS at 54 the flora also becomes part of the architectural space giving it a sort of ambiance and radiance whereas in MS1561 the flora and the foliage are very minimal.

The Clothing and Textile Suggestive of the Time Period and Region

In MSS 54 the textile is given a lot of importance, even in the architecture it is observed that there are patterns motifs on the walls very similar to that used in textiles and it seems almost as if the building is covered with intricately patterned cloth. The dressing is suggestive of a mixture of different styles within a culture and region. The attire worn by Laylā is completely different from any other person. She wears a long headdress of sorts, Laylā's dress is also similar to that worn by Laylā in MS1561 as well. The dress of Majnūn in the earlier phases of his life is very much reminiscent of Moghul dresses with an elaborate headdress with a feather on it and jewels on it. and long richly patterned long overcoat or robes in deep hues of rich colors, this is the case for both the manuscripts.

In comparison in the later phase of his life when Majnūn runs away into the wilderness his clothing also changes drastically, he is shown in rags in both MS-54 and MS1561 it is observed that Majnūn is barely clothed with only a strip of cloth and he is starved and his body is emaciated.

The choice of colors in depicting textiles within the manuscripts goes beyond mere aesthetic considerations; it establishes a connection to the broader cultural and artistic context of Rajasthani traditions in the case of MSS54 and Moghul culture traditional attires in MS1561. In the background detail in MSS54, there are cushions and carpets and other small intricately patterned accessories. We see patterns reminiscent of chintz and brocades and rich jewel tones velvets cushion coverlets. The diverse range of colors, spanning from creams to deep emerald green and rich violets, not only reflects the exquisite craftsmanship but also establishes a visual link to the vibrant and culturally significant Rajasthani artistic tradition. This study invites further research into the intersection of regional art styles and manuscript illumination, highlighting the interconnectedness of visual storytelling and cultural expression.

The Facial Expressions of Laila Mujnun in Ms 1561 and Mss 54

In MS 1561, the facial expressions of Majnun undergo subtle yet significant changes. The emphasis is notably placed on the size of the eyes, with side profiles dominating the visual narrative. In later stages, Majnun's expressions convey a downward and drooping demeanor, symbolizing the physical and emotional toll of his love-induced possession. The portrayal of bodily weakness along with the distraught eyes, creates a visual representation intended to evoke emotions of sympathy for the lovers from the viewers. Contrastingly, the facial expressions in MSS54 reveal distinct characteristics. Majnun's portrayal in MSS 54 while showcasing his bodily transformation with a pronounced downward and weakened build. The visual transformation observed in the eyes of Majnūn contributes to his continuous emotional strife. a consistent smile on Majnun's face is observed which juxtaposed against his bodily decline, gives the viewer a tiny glimpse of the paradoxical dilemma which is taking place inside Majnun.

While Majnun undergoes visible changes, Laila's facial expressions remain remarkably consistent across both manuscripts. Both the artists maintain a continuity in representing Laila's emotions, emphasizing her enduring love and steadfastness. This deliberate choice in portraying Laila's expressions accentuates the unwavering nature of her character in contrast to Majnun's chaotic transformation. The subtle yet impactful changes in facial expressions, particularly the eyes, contribute significantly to the overall narrative of Laila-Majnun. The juxtaposition of Majnun's evolving expressions with Laila's unwavering emotional stance adds depth to the visual interpretation by the artist.

Flora and Fauna Within the Image

The flora and the fauna and the two manuscripts are very different from each other in MSS 54, it is observed that there is a lot of plants and vegetables vegetation in the background we see a lot we see many kinds of trees for example mangoes but not us throughout the entire manuscript Baid-e Majnūn the weeping willow tree is drawn extensively some flowering trees the entire background space is filled up with a lot of vegetation the way the vegetation the flora is rendered the foliage the way the flow foliage are rendered very meticulous detailed with each leaf and fruit given equal importance and one can distinguish which type of a plant has grown there in MSS 54 the foliage almost become part of the architecture and part of a textual or a patterned background where as in MS1561 it is observed that the foliage is very minimal, the only plants that we see are in the background and although they are intricately detailed and very distinguishable yet they seem to peek out from behind walls and terraces. They are seen as background details.

Architecture and Space

The architecture and space in both the manuscripts is treated very differently. The architectural details of MS1561 are very minimal and simple, but they seem to be observed from life, they seem to be contemporary of the time period the manuscripts were created i.e. (early 18th century).

In comparison to MS1561, The architecture of manuscript MSS54 is more idealistic in some manners yet reminiscent of details prevalent in Rajasthani architecture and interior, specifically the use of pattern and motifs on the walls and arches. It is idealistic in terms of this very decorative manner of adornment within the architecture. One of the unique architectural detail in MSS54 is the onion shaped dome which can be seen in almost all the background architecture.

Comparative Analysis of the Visual Evolution of Qais to Majnūn in Manuscript Ms 1561 And Mss54:

The image of Qais, also known as Majnūn, in manuscript MS 1561, goes through an immense transformation, which is observed in his physical appearance. This analysis compares this transformation with the portrayal of Majnūn in MSS54, shedding light on the artistic choices of the unknown miniaturists who painstakingly visually narrate the progression of Qais from a handsome young man to the distressing figure of Majnūn. The manuscript MS 1561 provides a captivating visual narrative of Qais, a character who undergoes a striking metamorphosis from a youthful and handsomely adorned young man to the destitute and mentally afflicted Majnūn.

In the initial depictions of Qais, we observe a portrayal of a young man exuding charm and affluence. Given his elite background, Qais is presented as impeccably dressed in richly adorned and bejeweled robes. The manuscript captures the essence of his youthfulness, emphasizing his physical attractiveness before the pivotal separation from Laila. As the narrative unfolds, Qais acquires the title Majnūn, meaning "the possessed." This transformation is visually stark in MS 1561, where Majnūn is presented in tattered rags, symbolizing the deterioration of his mental state. The once-handsome Qais is now a shadow of his former self, with the external manifestation of his internal turmoil dominating the visual narrative. In contrast to MS 1561, MSS54 does not explicitly showcase the divergence between Qais and Majnūn. Remarkably, the visual transformation in MSS54 begins early in the manuscript, with Qais displaying signs of physical change, such as receding hairline. This prompts an intriguing question regarding the independent nature of Majnūn's possession and its swift advance.

The visual evolution of Qais to Majnūn in MS 1561 offers insights into the psychological and emotional journey of the character. The stark contrast between the initial portrayal of a well-dressed youth and the subsequent depiction of a mentally afflicted Majnūn invites the viewer to witness the distressing state a lovesick youth and on the impact of love-induced possession on one's identity. In conclusion, the research explores the visual transformation of Qais to Majnūn in manuscript MS 1561, comparing it with MSS54. By analyzing artistic choices in the visual depiction in both the manuscripts contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between mental states, external appearances, and the artistic interpretation of a timeless narrative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the visual analysis of Laylā Majnūn manuscripts, specifically Hatifi's Manuscript (MS No:1561) from Punjab University Library and the Lahore Museum Manuscript (MSS No:54), has provided valuable insights into the artistic representation of this timeless tale. The employed methodology, grounded in the examination of past data on manuscripts and illustrations related to Laylā Majnūn, laid the foundation for a focused exploration. The selection and scrutiny of the seven images from each manuscript revealed distinctive stylistic choices, thematic elements, and depiction of a narrative unique to each artistic rendition. Hatifi's Manuscript showcased intricate details, perhaps reflective of the regional influences prevalent during its creation, while the Lahore Museum Manuscript exhibited its own visual language, suggesting a dynamic evolution of artistic expression over time. This research contributes to the broader understanding of the cultural and historical significance of the manuscripts and the need to review them visually and critically as these narratives build the past culture of our regions and bring it into focus within the visual narrative of a story. The comparative study facilitates a richer appreciation of the variations and continuities in artistic interpretations across different

manuscripts. As visual storytellers, these manuscripts not only reflect the timeless nature of the Majnūn-Laylā tale but also offer glimpses into the diverse artistic traditions that have shaped this narrative over the centuries. Ultimately, this research serves as a steppingstone for further explorations of the visual and the type of illustrations in manuscript paintings, unraveling its complexities and enhancing our understanding of its enduring cultural resonance.

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Conflict of Interest


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